



War Comes to Morristown

Educational Program—Morristown National Historical Park **Targeted for students Fifth Grade and older studying the American Revolution**

This program will help the participating students better appreciate the problems faced by the soldiers of the Continental Army and civilians in New Jersey—such problems were increased by civilian and soldier living as neighbors during the army’s winter camp at Morristown, New Jersey. Groups with over twenty-five (25) students are divided into two sections: one starts with the Visitor Center Activity; and the other the Wick House Activity. After completion, they switch so all students may participate in all activities.

Essential Questions:

What were the events and actions that determined the course of the war?
Military and political aspects of the Revolution
How did military and political experiences affect the revolution?
What role did New Jersey play in the Revolution?
Economic, political, and social changes brought about by the American Revolution--
How did the revolution change people’s lives?

Visitor Center Activity:

Class divided into two groups. One will be given “character cards” of actual inhabitants living in the vicinity of the Jockey Hollow encampment who had claims against the army—most of them are complaints that soldiers had stolen various possessions from them. (The complaints on the character cards are based on original source material that has been paraphrased as the actual documents are too difficult for the student to comprehend.)

The other half will receive “character cards” with similar materials but from writings of people that appear to be sympathetic to the problems of the soldiers and will help them defend the soldiers’ side.

Each group will be given time to become familiarized with the information.

Then each group will present their side/information and give their opinion on the punishment (or lack thereof) that the soldiers should receive. This can be done in the form of a “hearing” where students represent particular 18th century people giving testimony.

After the “testimony”, the ranger will then ask the group as a whole to evaluate the kinds of problems, hardships and sacrifices made by civilians living near, and soldiers living in the Jockey Hollow encampment that “Hard Winter.” Also consider what they might do (as “civilians” or “soldiers”) if their complaints were not met. Conclude by discussing what was the result —neither soldier nor civilian received the material compensation they sought, yet (except for some brief mutinies) enough soldiers and civilians remained loyal to the cause of American Independence and eventually victory was won.

Background

But there is a very different kind of Inhabitants in the place to what there was when you was here. They receive us with coldness, and provide for us with reluctance.

General Nathanael Greene to General George Weedon, writing from Morristown NJ, December 25, 1779

By 1779, much of the enthusiasm for the war of American Independence had disappeared.

No end was in sight to the struggle, and the longer enlistments required for a full-time army had changed the identity of who was a full time soldier. Only the “lower sort” could invest the minimum of three years that an enlistment required. Many civilians saw the army as a band of ruffians, and many soldiers felt that the people had

forgotten them. Some of the people at home were uncomfortable with the very concept of a full time army, seeing it contradictory to a war for and by “the people.” Others fell into complacency, since they were sure all would be well now that France had formally entered the struggle.

New Jersey sat in the shadow of the main British headquarters in New York, so Washington’s army would spend a great deal of time marching through and camping in New Jersey.

During the first visit of Washington and his troops in 1777, the people in and around Morristown suffered epidemics of smallpox and dysentery. Churches and homes were used as hospitals to quarantine inoculated soldiers—the Presbyterian and Baptist churches would be in shambles for years.

Then in December 1779, came a much larger force, the main part of the Continental Army to camp for the winter and remaining till the spring thaw. What effects would such a visitation have on an outnumbered civilian population? In addition the worst winter ever experienced in this part of the world would make life nearly intolerable for both soldier and civilian and lead to growing tension between the different populations.

Washington in the Middle

Our Affairs are in so deplorable a condition (on the score of provisions) as to fill the Mind with the most anxious and alarming fears (Men half-starved, imperfectly Cloathed, riotous, and robbing the Country people of their subsistence from sheer necessity). *General Washington to General Irvine, January 9, 1780*

Gentlemen: The present situation of the Army with respect to provisions is the most distressing of any we have experienced since the beginning of the War. For a Fortnight (two weeks) past the Troops both Officers and Men, have been almost perishing for want. ... Their distress has in some instances prompted the Men to commit depredation on the property of the Inhabitants which at any other period would be punished with exemplary severity, but which can now be only lamented as the effect of an unfortunate necessity.

General Washington to the Magistrates of New Jersey, January 8, 1780.

Certain I am that unless Congress speaks in a more decisive tone; unless they are vested with powers by the several States competent to the great purposes of War, or assume them as matter of right; and they, and the states respectively, act with more energy than they hitherto have done, that our Cause is lost....

General Washington to Joseph Jones, delegate to the Continental Congress from Virginia, May 31, 1780

The commander in chief had the difficult job of dealing with the disgruntled civilian population and trying to keep his troops from mutinying. He agreed that the troops should not be stealing from the neighboring farmers, but understood the desperation of his army, especially when confronting the effects of the most severe winter they had ever seen in their part of the world. And if he complained too loudly about the weak Congress not doing enough to help the army, he could be considered disloyal, and a threat to be a military dictator.

Throughout the war Washington wanted to make it clear that here in America, the civilian authorities were in charge, not the military. Therefore, General Washington had to walk a very fine line to accomplish his task as Commander in Chief.

The Cost of Victory

To tell a (*distant*) person...that an Army reduced almost to nothing (by the expiration of short enlistments) should, sometimes, be five or six days together without Bread, then as many without Meat, and once or twice, two or three without either; that the same Army should have had numbers of Men in it with scarcely cloaths enough to cover their nakedness, and a full fourth of it without even the shadow of a blanket severe as the Winter was, and that men under these circumstances were held together, is hardly within the bounds of credibility, but is nevertheless true... *General Washington to John Augustine Washington June 6 - July 6, 1780*

Friends and Fellow-Citizens:

... You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils and joint efforts; of common dangers, sufferings and successes.

President George Washington, Farewell Address, September 19, 1796

Posterity! You will never know, how much it cost the present Generation, to preserve your Freedom! I hope you will make a good Use of it. If you do not, I shall repent in Heaven, that I ever took half the Pains to preserve it. *John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 26, 1777*

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17770426ja> 3

By the end of the American Revolution, no one, civilians, officers or soldiers, really had their complaints met. And before the war was over, there were a few actual cases of rebellion in brief soldier mutinies. When the fighting ceased, the veterans who served were badly neglected. Yet despite all the difficulties and against all odds, this long eight-year war led to the winning of American Independence. Understanding the shared hardships and sacrifices of those who witnessed the Jockey Hollow encampment of 1779-80 helps us appreciate the sheer magnitude of the achievement of American independence and freedom they gained for future generations.

Wick House Activity (approx. 50-60 min.)

INTRODUCTION -- Before the activity, (if possible) the staff person (ranger or volunteer) either at the Wick House or Visitor Center) will give a BRIEF introduction (no more than five minutes) to the Wick House, setting the stage for the activity--the home was shared by the Wicks and certain officers during the winter of 1779-80.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACTIVITY—The class will be divided into thirds—this can be done before the group enters the Wick House or before they begin the activity.

The group will be instructed as to their role and task: They are to become “experts” in the area of the house they are assigned—the rooms they are in or can look into in that third of the home. They are to locate objects (which can include furniture) that help us learn about the people that used that part of the house during the 1779-80 encampment. Students will have a notebook available which will have pictures of and a description of some of the key objects. They are to locate and know something about at least five of the objects in their area. They should be prepared to talk about their chosen objects to the rest of the class. While they are preparing, the ranger (or if no ranger, the volunteer) and any adult supervision will be available to assist the three groups and help them to use their limited time effectively, as they have about 10-15 minutes to prepare.

PRESENTATIONS BY GROUPS—After it has been determined by the chaperone and ranger that the groups are ready, then all the groups will gather in one area of the house, either the Officer’s quarters or the Wick Family quarters. The students that are “experts” in that area will then identify each object they have chosen to tell about (the ranger can assist in pointing it out/showing it) and tell what they have learned about it. After they have told the rest of the class about the five objects they have chosen, the teacher and/or the ranger can ask the class the following question(s) –

What do the objects tell us about the people who used them—who they were/what they did?

After the students have done this in the two areas of the house serving as “quarters,” the final stop should be in the kitchen. After the “experts” for this area give their presentation, the group can remain in the kitchen (sitting on the benches if possible) for a brief summary discussion with the leaders.

SUMMING UP QUESTIONS -- The activity can conclude with some final summary questions asked by the teacher (or, if necessary the ranger)

What were the sacrifices made by the Wick family during this winter of 1779-80?

How did the lives of the officers and civilians change because of the war?

The ranger then should answer any questions by the students/chaperones as time allows.

Character card text (for students)

Original source material/background (for teacher)

Characters “pro-soldier”

Dr. Thacher, E. Huntington, Gen. Greene, Judge Symes, J. P. Martin

James Thacher

I am a doctor in the American army and lived in Jockey Hollow during the “Hard Winter”. I wrote about how hard it was for the soldiers as they worked to build their winter camp there.

It is difficult to describe the sufferings of the poor soldiers. When on duty, they face the worst of weather with storms and severe cold.

At night, they must sleep on a pile of straw and only one blanket per man. They are badly clothed and some have no shoes.

The snow is now four to six feet deep, and blocks the roads so supplies cannot reach the camp. For ten days we have received only two pounds of meat for each man, and often we are without meat or bread, or both. The result is that the soldiers are so weak from hunger and cold, they are almost unable to do their tasks, or work on building their huts.

FOR TEACHERS--Original Source:

(January 1780)

We...on the 14th (of December, 1779) reached this wilderness, about three miles from Morristown, where we are to build log-huts for winter-quarters....

The snow on the ground is about two feet deep, and the weather extremely cold; the soldiers are destitute of both tents and blankets, and some of them are actually barefooted and almost naked.

The weather for several days has been remarkably cold and stormy. On the 3d instant, (January 3, 1780) we experienced one of the most tremendous snow-storms ever remembered; no man could endure its violence many minutes without danger of his life. Several marquees were torn asunder and blown down over the officers' heads in the night, and some of the soldiers were actually covered while in their tents, and buried like sheep under the snow.

... the sufferings of the poor soldiers can scarcely be described, while on duty they are unavoidably exposed to all the inclemency of storms and severe cold; at night they now have a bed of straw on the ground, and a single blanket to each man; they are badly clad, and some are destitute of shoes.

...The snow is now from four to six feet deep, which so obstructs the roads as to prevent our receiving a supply of provisions. For the last ten days we have received but two pounds of meat a man, and we are frequently for six or eight days entirely destitute of meat, and then as long without bread. The consequence is the soldiers are so enfeebled from hunger and cold, as to be almost unable to perform their military duty, or labor in constructing their huts. *From the “Military Journal” of Dr. James Thacher*

Ebenezer Huntington

I am an officer who lived in Jockey Hollow.

In December, the weather has been so severe that the men have suffered greatly; many without shoes and stocking, working on their huts knee deep in snow. Poor fellows! I am very sorry for them, and I am very angry at most people in this country, who are not grateful for what the soldiers are doing for them.

FOR TEACHERS—original source

“Camp in Morristown...You will by the date perceive that we are in camp, tho’ expect if good weather, to have the Men’s Hutts so far completed that they may go into them on Sunday or Monday. The officers hutts are not begun, nor will they be meddled with till the men are covered. My own Hutt will not be meddled with till after

the officers have finished theirs. The severity of the weather hath been such that the men have suffered much; without shoes and stockings, and working half leg deep in snow. Poor fellows, my heart bleeds for them, while I Damn my country as void of gratitude.”

Lieutenant Colonel Ebenezer Huntington, temporary commander of Webb's Regt. & Stark's Brigade to Colonel Webb December 24, 1779

Nathanael Greene

I am a general and lived with my wife Katy at the Arnold Tavern in the center of Morristown during the “Hard Winter.”

After the bad blizzard we had in the beginning of January, I wrote a friend:

I have never seen such a bad winter. For over six days it has been very cold and the snow is very deep. The camp cannot get food from its storehouses and the soldiers have had nothing to eat for three or four days—and they have not had the full amount of bread and meat they should have for over eight days.

It has been very difficult for the army due to the weather, the lack of clothing and food. But the soldiers have shown much patience and endurance, for which they should be honored...

FOR TEACHERS--Original sources:

Such weather as we have had, never did I feel. For six or eight days it has been so extremely cold..., the snow it is also very deep, and much drifted. ...the army has been cut off from its magazines, [*supply storehouses*] and been obliged to fast for several days together. We have been alternately out of meat and bread for eight or nine days past, and without either for three or four. The distress of the army has been exceedingly great from the weather, want of clothing and provisions. But the soldiers have borne it with great patience and fortitude. They have displayed a degree of magnanimity under their sufferings which does them the highest honour.... *General Nathanael Greene to an Unidentified Person, January 11, 1780*

Our Army is without Meat or Bread; and have been for two or three days past. Poor Fellows! They exhibit a picture truly distressing. More than half naked, and above two thirds starved. A Country, once overflowing with plenty, are now suffering an Army employed for the defense of everything that is dear and valuable, to perish for want of food. (*General Greene to Moore Furman, January 4, 1780*)

John Cleves Symes

I am a judge for the Morris County Court

In March 1780, I wrote General Washington about my concern of how his soldiers were suffering because the paper money the army needed to buy supplies was worth less and less. I also told him of how unhappy I was that some people of this area were overcharging them for supplies they needed. I believe that these soldiers that have been so badly treated should complain to the County officials.

FOR TEACHERS-- Original source:

“The grand jurors for the County of Morris have requested me to inform your Excellency that they feel in the most sensible manner the distresses which the Army must experience from the depreciation of the money without any other addition are deeply wounded at an Information that there were some persons who were so lost to the duty they owe to brave men suffering and exposing themselves for their Country; so lost to every humane, generous and benevolent feeling of the heart, as to take the advantage which the late scarcity of food in the Army presented them with, to extort from the poor soldiers the most extravagant prices for provision. I am also requested by the Grand Jurors, to desire your Excellency, to direct (in General Orders) that those soldiers who have been thus shamefully and unreasonably treated or can give information on the subject, do make their complaints in form before the Grand Jury or some Magistrate of the County, that those extortioners may be proceeded against according to law, or pointed out by the public as unconscionable men.” (*John Cleves Symes [NJ Justice] to General George Washington, March 6, 1780*)

I am **Joseph Plumb Martin**

I am a soldier in the First Connecticut Regiment, and lived in a hut in the Morristown encampment of 1779-80. We had a blizzard during the first week of January that lasted almost four days! During that storm, I was so hungry that the only food I put into my mouth was a little tree bark that I chewed off a stick. I saw several men roast their old shoes and eat them....If this was not suffering, I do not know what is.

FOR TEACHERS--Original source:

I do solemnly declare that I did not put a single morsel of victuals into my mouth for four days and as many nights, except a little black birch bark which I gnawed off a stick of wood, if that can be called victuals. I saw several of the men roast their old shoes and eat them, and I was afterwards informed by one of the officers' waiters, that some of the officers killed and ate a favorite little dog that belonged to one of them. If this was not "suffering" I request to be informed what can pass under that name. If "suffering" like this did not "try men's souls," I confess that I do not know what could.

Joseph Plumb Martin, from his "Narrative" reprinted as "Private Yankee Doodle."

Characters "pro-civilian"

Judge Halsey, J. Guerin, E. Conger & T. Fairchild, J. & R. Stevenson, Rev. T. Johnes

I am **Benjamin Halsey**

I and other officials representing the citizens of Morris County wrote General Washington the following letter: When you asked the people of New Jersey to give food for the soldiers who were without supplies because of the blizzard at the beginning of January, the people of Morris County gave generously. Now these soldiers are stealing from the people who had done so much to help them.

They wander from the camp at night and steal not only food but money, clothes and other items.

Something must be done. Order the men to stop their stealing or have the officers stop them from wandering from camp without supervision.

The County Courthouse, which also contains the jail, is a wreck because so many troops have used it since first coming to Morristown in 1777. We cannot even keep prisoners from escaping from the jail.

With all respect, General, shouldn't the Continental Congress pay the army to fix the building? **FOR**

FOR TEACHERS—original source

Letter from the Justices of Morris County to Gen. Washington, January 25, 1780

To his Excellency Genl Washington The Representation of the Justices of the County of Morris on Behalf of the good people thereof:

Sheweth: That agreeable to your Excellency's Requisition when the Troops were in distress, We have called on the Inhabitants of the County, who with the utmost cheerfulness have exerted themselves, many of them, even beyond their Abilities for the relief of the Army, in hopes that when the necessity ceased, the Depredations comitted on the property. & the Insults Offered to the Persons of the Inhabitants, when Hunger pinched the Troops, would cease also. But as was too truly Apprehended, the Forbearance of the People in exhibiting complaints, and backwardness of the Officers in punishing, while the distress continued, when the complaints were made. which nothing but necessity could justify is followed by a licensiousness very injurious to the Inhabitants frequent complaints are yet made and many recent incidents testify that the Soldiery continue in parties to wander abroad from Camp, frequently under cover of the night not only to Plunder and steal provision but money Cloathes etc. etc. and also to maltreat and wantonly abuse the good people who have generously strove to relieve the army when in want.

We are not insensible of the difficulty under which your Excellency & the Officers of the Army must Labour in putting a stop to the torrent attended with the disadvantages that at present exist: yet with submission we take the liberty to suggest whether the Evil complained of may not at least in a measure be prevented by Issuing Orders or otherwise limiting them from wandering about without proper officers.

We further beg leave to Represent to your Excellency that the Prison & County house which when the Continental guard was first placed there was whole and in good Repair, and by being frequently and constantly occupied by the same since that time until it is Rendered almost useless and the Culprits committed by the Civil authority can by no means be safely kept. Several such prisoners having lately made their escape the said Guard not being accountable to any County Authority subjects us to peculiar difficulty in the Administration of Justice.

As this County has during the present contest, by the Troops being much of the time encamped here, and constantly passing and repassing, suffered in many respects. We submit to your Excellency whether the damage done to the said house by the troops ought not to be repaired at the expense of the Continent. If so, we doubt not your Excellency will give the Quarter Master General instructions respecting the matter.

In full confidence that your Excellency will with equal exertion do everything in your power to secure and protect the Subject, as to provide for the Soldier.

We are with the most perfect respect Your Excellency's most Obednt. & Humble Servants

Signed by order and in behalf of the whole

Benjn. Hallsey

John Brookfield

Jonn. Stiles

Benjn. Lindsly

Morristown 25th January 1780

NOTE: You can see the **original document** at...

The *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress*

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mgn4&fileName=gwpage063.db&recNum=1080>

Reply of Gen. Washington to the Justices of Morris County, New Jersey January 27, 1780

(Benjamin Hallsey, John Brookfield, Jonathan Stiles, and Benjamin Lindsly.)

Head Quarters, Morris Town, January 27, 1780.

Gentln: I had this morning the honor to receive Your Letter of the 25th Inst. You will permit me to assure You Gentlemen, that I entertain the highest sense of the exertions which have been made by the Justices and the Inhabitants of this County to relieve the distresses of the Army in the article of provision; and I think it but right to add, that from these exertions and those of the Justices and Inhabitants of the State of Jersey in general, the Troops and in them the public, have derived the most important and happy benefits. There is nothing Gentlemen I wish so much, as security to the Subjects of these States in their persons and property; and any events that interrupt this affect me sensibly. Those you represent I feel in a peculiar manner, and I entreat you to be satisfied, that no means in my power shall be wanting to put a stop to every species of such practices in future. If any in the mean time should unfortunately take place, the Offenders if they can be pointed out by the Inhabitants, shall be subjected to the most condign (*appropriate*) punishment.

I am Joshua Guerin

I own a farm in Jockey Hollow not far from where the New York troops built their huts for their camp during the winter of 1779-80.

During their stay, the Continental Army damaged my seven-acre wheat field.

The fences of my wheat field were burned and the Grain was damaged. Half of the wheat was destroyed. I have still not received any pay for these damages.

In 1779, soldiers stole a young sheep, a great coat, one new linen petticoat and 2 good shifts.

The next year, they stole 2 Bushels Rye, 2 sheep, 2 axes, and 6 bushels of potatoes

NOTE: **Great Coat**

Many men of the 18th century chose great coats as their protective outer garment in foul weather. Most often made of heavy wool, it served well to keep one warm and dry.

Petticoat

A woman's skirt-like garment worn with a gown or jacket. Most gowns were open-fronted robes needing the addition of the petticoat to fill the gap. Quilted ones could be worn for both warmth and fashion. Underpetticoats of linen, wool, or cotton were added for warmth

Shift

The shift was the undermost garment worn by children and women. Made from various qualities of white linen, it had either a drawstring or plain neck, as well as drawstrings or cuffs at the elbows. It could be plain or lace trimmed.

Rye *Rye is a grass, which like wheat, is grown to produce grain used to make bread.*

Definitions (with pictures) from the Colonial Williamsburg web site---see <http://www.history.org/history/clothing/men/mglossary.cfm> and <http://www.history.org/history/clothing/women/wglossary.cfm>

I am Enoch Conger

The following articles were taken from me by soldiers of the Continental Army.

1 Great Coat & 32 chickens
1 young cow
1 Pewter Tea pot & one Basin
1 Cedar pail
1 ½ canisters full of coffee...
1 Pepper box & 3 pair stockings...
1 Blanket
2 axes & 1 sheep...

I am Theodosia Fairchild

I say that the Great Coat mentioned on the inventory was stolen by the soldiers of the Continental Army, as I saw the soldiers who now have it. I also say that the cow was taken out of his Barn as I saw tracks leading toward their Encampment. I also believe the other articles listed by Mr. Conger were taken by the soldiers

We are John and Rachel Stephenson

We are merchants and have a general store in our house on Spring Street in Morristown.

We are true patriots to the American cause, but to accept the Continental Currency printed by the Continental Congress is very difficult. Everyone knows that the Congress is broke and has no money to back it up.

Unfortunately this is the only money that our Army has to buy things for the troops.

Or they offer "Certificates" which are only pieces of paper promising payment someday.

We are loyal to the cause and want to help the army, but if we give a dollar's worth of goods for a dollar of Continental Currency, we will go broke.

FOR TEACHERS--Background:

The Stephenson's advertisement in the New Jersey Journal newspaper says that the items listed would be sold for "CASH or country produce, as low as the times will admit." This was necessary because of the wartime inflation due to the lack of confidence in the paper money printed by the Continental Congress. To pay for the war, the Congress of the new United States of America printed its own money, called Continental Currency. Since there were no gold and silver mines in North America, coin (called "Hard Money") was scarce, and the weak Continental Congress had no gold or silver coin to back its money. With over four years of the war over, many people did not want to trade their valuable crops for nearly worthless paper. (The inflation rate had risen to 60:1-- that is, it would take at least 60 paper dollars to buy one dollars' worth of something.) Some people held back their produce or livestock for higher prices to come--this was called "forestalling" and was illegal. Or they could trade with people who had hard money (because they were secretly trading with the British.) This was called "London trade" and was against the law.

I am the **Reverend Timothy Johns** (*pronounced "Jones"*)

I am the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Morristown.

As you know, in early 1777, General Washington's troops stayed in and around Morristown. The General had his troops inoculated for smallpox. Though this helped to save the army, many people in town became ill and 67 of them died.

We allowed the army to use our church as a hospital for soldiers recovering from their smallpox inoculation. The Baptist Church did the same. But years later, the churches are in such disrepair that they still cannot be used for church services. We respectfully ask the General to have these buildings repaired.